

# Four ways to include drug prevention in your religious programs

A  
GUIDEBOOK  
FOR  
FAITH LEADERS

As a religious and educational leader, you are well aware of the many **CHALLENGES** that youth face growing up in America today.

Illicit drug use, as well as underage use of alcohol and tobacco products, continues at high levels among teenagers, and in some communities illegal drugs have drawn youth into a deadly world of addiction and crime. Drug use affects everyone — communities, families and individuals — and instilling strong values, which are rooted for many in religious faith, is a protective factor in preventing many high-risk behaviors.

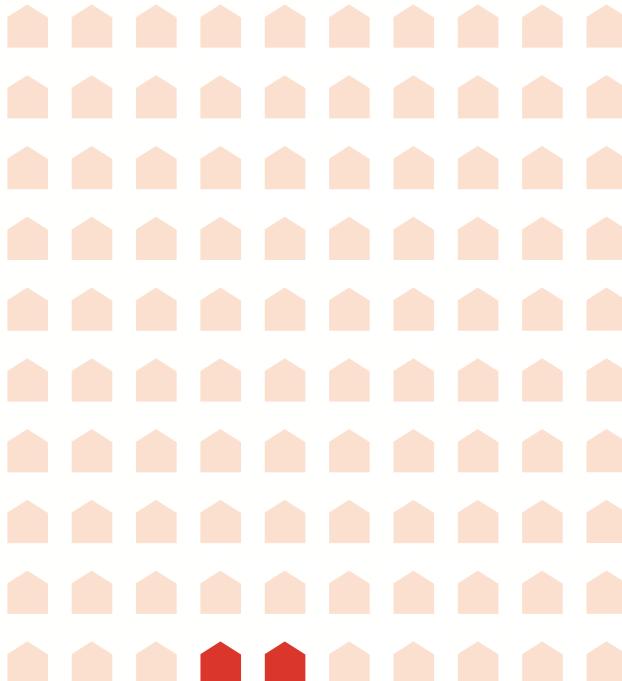
Despite the problems that drugs present, your leadership provides a source of hope for the many individuals, families and communities affected by drug use and other related health and social issues. Research shows that youth who participate in a religious community are less likely to use drugs. In a 1999 Gallup Poll, more than half of the teens surveyed said that religion helps them deal with problems related to drugs and alcohol.

*Oftentimes, youth begin experimenting with marijuana, inhalants, or Ecstasy because they believe that these drugs are harmless. In reality, these drugs are quite harmful and may seriously endanger one's life.*

In many ways, your existing youth programs — retreats, summer programs and other supervised activities — are effective forms of substance abuse prevention. Youth turn to their faith communities to seek spiritual guidance about issues such as peer pressure, relationships and drugs. Likewise, parents and other adult caregivers turn to faith communities for help in communicating their values and keeping young people safe. As religious leaders, you can ensure that youth and adults have the facts, along with the moral and spiritual values to help them resist drugs.

Traditionally and collectively, the faith community has been at the forefront of responding to the immediate social service needs of individuals and communities. You provide food and clothing for the needy. You shelter the homeless. You offer drug treatment, referral services and support groups for members struggling to keep the faith. When it comes to preventing substance abuse, you can also play an important role.

Whether you hold a local or national position within your religious organization, you can provide the context and resources to empower parents, youth workers and other adults to engage in substance abuse prevention activities. This booklet details four ways in which to strengthen your commitment to substance abuse prevention.



*Of 1,236 congregations surveyed, only **2 percent** have participated in or supported substance abuse programs, as compared with 33 percent for hunger-related projects, 18 percent for housing/shelter and 11 percent for clothing.*

*Source: National Congregations Study, 1998.*

# 1

## Elevate substance abuse prevention on your faith agenda.

Renew or establish a strong position statement and policies against illicit drug use as well as underage alcohol and tobacco use. The position statement should acknowledge the risks (physical, social, legal, mental, financial and spiritual) associated with the use of these substances.

**TAKE A PUBLIC STAND** against drugs and make your position about substance abuse prevention known! Announce it at local, state, regional and/or national meetings. Include it in your vision and expectation statements, new-member classes, newsletters, bulletins and any other communications with members.

**PARTNER** with community-based, private and nonprofit organizations that have substance abuse prevention programs. Organizations such as the Community Anti-Drug Coalitions of America ([www.cadca.org](http://www.cadca.org)) can help you identify resources, training and grant awards that augment programs already extended to fellow faith leaders.

**COLLABORATE** with local seminaries, divinity schools and other religious institutions. Encourage them to include youth substance abuse prevention training and counseling in their curricula. Consider teaming up with these institutions to identify opportunities for their students to work with your youth programs to provide substance abuse prevention counseling, presentations and workshops.

### KEY MESSAGES FROM THE NATIONAL YOUTH ANTI-DRUG MEDIA CAMPAIGN

#### YOUTH MESSAGES

- “Most kids don’t use drugs.”*
- “Using drugs is likely to lead to negative consequences.”*
- “A drug-free lifestyle is likely to lead to positive outcomes.”*
- “Spend time in healthy and positive activities.”*

#### ADULT MESSAGES

- “Marijuana and inhalants can be harmful to kids physically, socially and spiritually.”*
- “Each child is at risk for using drugs.”*
- “Your actions can make a difference when it comes to influencing kids against using drugs.”*
- “Know what your children are doing — their activities and how they spend their time.”*

# 2

## Put substance abuse prevention messages in the context of your faith and **religious beliefs.**

Adults and youth want answers to their tough questions about drug use. The National Youth Anti-Drug Media Campaign can provide the facts, but only you can provide the religious context in which other leaders — and ultimately youth workers and parents — can help teens realize the benefits of living healthy and drug-free lives.

**INCORPORATE** substance abuse prevention messages into your sermon series, homilies, newsletters, media ministries, religious education and parenting classes, retreats, camps and other youth and parent events. Include articles, parenting tips or quizzes related to substance abuse prevention in your faith community's parenting publications and resources. You can also order free copies of the campaign's brochure, *Keeping Your Kids Drug-Free – A How-To Guide for Parents and Caregivers*.

**LAUNCH** a local campaign to promote your faith community's commitment to substance abuse prevention. Develop your own themes and messages that clearly portray the spiritual benefits of being drug-free. Consider the messages provided by the National Youth Anti-Drug Media Campaign, which are based on research that has proven to be effective in changing behavior.

**DEVELOP** or customize educational material (such as study guides, curricula, training programs and modules) that puts substance abuse prevention information in the context of your religious beliefs.

**SELECT** a day, a week or a month to celebrate your faith community's commitment to substance abuse prevention. For example, designate the month of October as substance abuse prevention month. Use the National Youth Anti-Drug Media Campaign's guidelines for organizing activities and events to help youth avoid the lure of drugs.

# 3

## Help youth sort out the meaning in the messages.

Many teens spend more waking hours with the media — television, movies, music, magazines and computers — than they do with parents and other adults. Popular culture, reflected in the media, has the power to shape values and beliefs in ways that often challenge the teachings of your faith. The same media can also provide youth with exciting ways to discover important religious values. In order to help youth sort out the subtle meanings in media messages and to become critical viewers of the media, many faith leaders are incorporating media literacy lessons into their youth programs. When youth understand the impact of the media in popular culture, they are less susceptible to its negative influences.

**EDUCATE** parents and other adults about the importance of helping kids analyze the media. Increase their awareness by including discussions of media literacy principles in parenting classes and tips in parenting materials.

**INCLUDE** activities that promote critical awareness of the media. For example, host an event where kids review music lyrics and music videos, clips from television shows, commercials and magazine print ads. Ask youth to identify specific content or images that relate to drugs, alcohol, tobacco, sex, violence and racial and gender stereotypes. In small groups, have them discuss substance abuse and the portrayals of drugs, alcohol and tobacco in contemporary pop and rap music. Together, evaluate underlying values and messages; specifically, how they compare and contrast with those embraced by your religious beliefs.

For additional information on media literacy, exercises and programs that are currently under way in faith communities, visit [www.theantidrug.com/faith/medialiteracy](http://www.theantidrug.com/faith/medialiteracy).

# 4

## Look for opportunities to spread the word.

The impact of substance abuse prevention initiatives in faith organizations across America will be enhanced to the extent that the messages are based on researched facts and are communicated by many voices. Consider some of the following suggestions to extend the reach of your substance abuse prevention initiatives.

**DEVELOP** partnerships with area faith- and community-based organizations as a way of coordinating training programs and sharing information and substance abuse prevention educational resources that have proven to be effective. Organize a “challenge” with other faith and community substance abuse prevention organizations that encourage youth leaders to compile and trade activities and ideas.

**CONTACT** national, state and/or community alcohol and drug programs for technical assistance and guidance on ways to develop or enhance your existing substance abuse prevention programs.

**LET LOCAL MEDIA KNOW** about your initiatives. Partner with community newspapers to produce special inserts or sections that promote participation in faith-based youth programs and community involvement as a protective factor in substance abuse prevention.

**INCLUDE** special sections on your organization's Web site to promote your youth and parenting outreach and substance abuse prevention programs. Consider naming your youth area "My Anti-Drug," and let kids share their thoughts and ideas about how their beliefs help them steer clear of drugs and other risky behaviors. A special parenting area on your Web site can include examples of success stories, parenting tips, surveys and resources that reflect your religious traditions. You can help visitors find research-based facts and substance abuse prevention and parenting tips quickly by placing a "Parents. The Anti-Drug" banner on your Web site and by linking or borrowing content from the media campaign's Web sites.

If you have programs or activities that are effective in your congregations, share the information with other local, regional and national organizations — and with the National Youth Anti-Drug Media Campaign. Visit [www.theantidrug.com/faith](http://www.theantidrug.com/faith) and post the highlights of your effective substance abuse prevention activities or programs so that others might use them too!

*Are you working with businesses and schools to promote substance abuse prevention in your community? Some additional resources to assist parents, teachers and employers are located on [www.theantidrug.com](http://www.theantidrug.com).*

*The National Youth Anti-Drug Media Campaign (NYAMC) is committed to educating and empowering America's youth to reject illicit drugs and provides suggestions for national and local religious leaders to directly address adolescent substance abuse. The NYAMC offers research-based resources and ideas for use in the context of your religious beliefs, values and traditions. Through our joint efforts, teens will learn that drug use is dangerous, that it keeps them from achieving the goals they cherish and that most teens do not use drugs.*

# resources

## THE NATIONAL YOUTH ANTI-DRUG MEDIA CAMPAIGN

is a program of the White House Office of National Drug Control Policy. The media campaign is designed to educate and empower youth to reject illicit drugs.

[www.mediacampaign.org](http://www.mediacampaign.org)  
[www.theantidrug.com](http://www.theantidrug.com)

## THE NATIONAL CLEARINGHOUSE FOR ALCOHOL AND DRUG INFORMATION

**(NCADI)** is the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration's (SAMHSA) one-stop resource for the most current and comprehensive substance abuse prevention and treatment information. NCADI offers a catalog of more than 1,000 free resources including English-, Spanish- and Asian-language publications, videotapes and other educational materials to help parents talk to their children about drug and alcohol use. Most of the materials are free. For more information, contact:

NCADI  
P.O. Box 2345  
Rockville, MD 20847  
1-800-788-2800  
[www.health.org](http://www.health.org)

## COMMUNITY ANTI-DRUG COALITIONS

**OF AMERICA (CADCA)** is a national substance abuse prevention organization that works with community-based coalitions to represent their interests at a national level. CADCA also provides technical assistance and training, public policy, media strategies and marketing programs, conferences and special events.

### CADCA

901 N. Pitt St., Suite 300  
Alexandria, VA 22314  
1-800-54-CADCA  
(703) 706-0565  
[www.cadca.org](http://www.cadca.org)

## THE COMMUNITY COALITION DRUG

**PREVENTION CAMPAIGN** is a joint effort with the National Youth Anti-Drug Media Campaign to increase awareness of and participation in community anti-drug coalitions and substance abuse prevention organizations across the country. Individuals and members of faith communities, businesses and organizations who would like to join with others in their community to keep youth drug-free should contact:

[www.youcanhelpkids.org](http://www.youcanhelpkids.org)  
[www.helpyourcommunity.org](http://www.helpyourcommunity.org)  
1-877-KIDS-313

# National Youth Anti-Drug Media Campaign

## web sites

All of the campaign resources mentioned in this brochure are available on the following Web sites:

### ***[www.theantidrug.com](http://www.theantidrug.com)***

*Theantidrug.com*, a parenting site, provides tips, drug resources and substance abuse prevention advice for parents and adult influencers. A special community section on the Web site assists teachers, employers and faith workers in incorporating substance abuse prevention activities into their programs. Information is also available in Spanish, Chinese, Korean, Vietnamese and Cambodian.

### ***[www.mediacampaign.org](http://www.mediacampaign.org)***

Provides access to all of the National Youth Anti-Drug Media Campaign's ads, reports, tool kits and resources necessary to initiate a local or regional media campaign. You can download banners and graphics for use in organizational Web sites, publications and electronic media. Campaign materials are available online.

### ***[www.teachersguide.org](http://www.teachersguide.org)***

This site contains classroom activities for use by teachers in incorporating substance abuse prevention materials into liberal arts and health classes. Faith workers can also get ideas for including anti-drug themes in weekly lesson plans and activities.

### ***[www.freevibe.com](http://www.freevibe.com)***

Talking about drugs doesn't have to be a lecture. Youth can get the straight facts about drugs, communicate with other teens and play online games with positive messages on *freevibe.com*.

Yes! I would like more information on how to include substance abuse prevention messages in our religious programs. Please send me the following material(s):

**PLEASE INDICATE QUANTITY**

*Pathways to Prevention: Guiding Youth to Wise Decisions* activity guide  
(Product Code PHD903)

*Four Ways to Prevention* brochure for faith leaders  
(Product Code PHD904)

*Keeping Your Kids Drug-Free* parenting brochure  
(Product Code PHD884)

NCADI publications catalog  
(Product Code EN8400)

The NCADI catalog lists more than 1,000 free resources including brochures, statistics, posters, videos and more!

NAME

ORGANIZATION

ADDRESS

CITY

TELEPHONE

STATE

E-MAIL

All materials can be ordered online at <http://health.org/catalog/catalog.htm> or by calling 1-800-788-2800.

## ANTI-DRUG RESOURCES



**FAITH.**  
THE ANTI-DRUG.

The National Youth  
Anti-Drug Media Campaign  
1-800-788-2800

**WEB RESOURCES**

PARENTS: [www.theantidrug.com](http://www.theantidrug.com)

YOUTH: [www.freeripple.com](http://www.freeripple.com)

INFO: [www.mediacampaign.org](http://www.mediacampaign.org)

[www.health.org](http://www.health.org)

National Youth Anti-Drug Media Campaign

National Clearinghouse for Alcohol and Drug Information

P.O. Box 2345

Rockville, MD 20847-2345

Order your free copies of materials that promote substance abuse prevention in your religious outreach.

*Pathways to Prevention: Guiding Youth to Wise Decisions*  
activity guide (Product Code PHD903)

*Keeping Your Kids Drug-Free* parenting brochure (PDD884)  
*Four Ways to Prevention* brochure for faith leaders (Product Code PHD904)  
NCADI publications catalog (Product Code EN8400)

Visit **[www.theantidrug.com/faith](http://www.theantidrug.com/faith)** for parenting information or to download content for your Web site, bulletins or newsletters.

**FAITH.**  
THE ANTI-DRUG.